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# IN HOC VINCE

THE STORY OF  
A RED CROSS FLAG

BY  
FLORENCE L. BARCLAY

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**First printed as a contribution to  
King Albert's Book**

**Now reprinted, as originally written;  
including the final sentences, on the  
symbolism of the story, omitted from  
"King Albert's Book"**

# In hoc Vince

## The Story of A Red Cross Flag

By

Mrs. Florence L. Barclay <sup>Louise (Charlesworth)</sup>

London and New York  
G. P. Putnam's Sons

1915



**First impression Easter 1915**

In hoc ☩ Vince

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# In hoc ☩ Vĩnce

TO HIS MAJESTY  
THE KING OF THE BELGIANS

**SIRE,**

*AS my contribution to the tribute of universal sympathy and admiration now presented to Your Majesty, I have been asked to write a short story, bearing upon the great events of the past months.*

*In humbly accepting this privilege, I cannot but be conscious that this is not a time for fiction; therefore the story which I now have*

### **3n hoc † Vince**

*the honour of offering to Your Majesty is fact—true in its main details—given as it reached me, in the sublime simplicity of a soldier's letter from the front.*

**DURING the masterly retreat of the allied forces after the battle of Mons, a young British officer was ordered to round up stragglers in a small town, which had just been evacuated by our troops.**

**There was no time to lose. The enemy, in overwhelming force, was sweeping down upon the defenceless place. Shells were falling on all sides. The distant rumble of a relentless approach drew, every moment nearer.**

**The young officer, marching his little company rapidly along the deserted streets, crossed a cobbled square, and came upon a municipal**

## **In hoc ☩ Vince**

building, temporarily converted into a hospital.

He stepped within.

“Any men here, able to march?” he began—then paused abruptly and looked around him.

There was no question of stragglers, here.

Scores of wounded and of dying lay helpless upon the floor, each where he had been hurriedly placed.

A little party of British Red Cross nurses moved among them, doing their utmost to tend, relieve, and comfort.

While the tall youth in khaki stood silent in the doorway, a shell shrilled over the building, crashed into a house close by, and burst with a deafening noise. A moment of tense silence. Then a Tommy laughed.

“It’ll save the doctors trouble, if a

## **In hoc ✠ Vince**

few of them things come in here," he said. "Do our amputating for nothing, they will!"

The Sister in charge of the little band of English nurses chanced to be kneeling near the door, supporting the head of a dying lad. He pushed away the cup she was holding to his lips and gazed into her face, sudden terror in his eyes.

"They won't shoot on the Red Cross, will they, nurse?" he whispered. "Ain't we safe under the flag?"

Her quiet smile was reassuring. "Perfectly safe, my lad. Don't you worry. Drink this, and lie still."

Then, looking up, she saw the young officer standing in the doorway.

He raised his hand in salute.

"I suppose there is nothing I can do," he said. "I am rounding up

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stragglers and marching them out. But nobody here could do any marching. Shall I take a message through for you? I'll send back help, if possible."

Kneeling there, with the dying boy's head upon her arm, she looked steadily at him, and it struck him that he had never before met eyes so full of a calm and steadfast courage.

"We are all right," she said, slipping a folded jacket beneath the head she was supporting; "quite all right—doing famously!"

But the next moment she was beside him in the doorway, and had caught him by the arm.

"Don't go!" she whispered. "For God's sake, don't go! I need help; and you must help me."

"Do you want to get out of this?"



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asked the young officer, speaking hurriedly, and very low.

The Englishwoman looked at him.

"Oh, I say, I beg your pardon! Of course I know you wouldn't leave them. Tell me how I can help. What can I do?"

"Listen," she said. "There is not a moment to lose. Did you notice the roof of this building, as you crossed the square? There's a flagstaff and cord, all complete; but no flag. Do you understand? No Red Cross flag. And the Germans are beginning to shell the town. You must find me a Red Cross flag, and hoist it, before you go."

The young officer stood beside her, uncertain, perplexed; dismay in his honest eyes.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said.

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"But I have no Red Cross flag; and, for the life of me, I don't know where to get one."

"Then you must make one," she urged. "We have over a hundred wounded men under this roof." She shook him by the sleeve. "Can't you contrive something? Can't you think of something? Can't you *make* me a Red Cross flag?"

The boy stood for a moment in stern thought. All the man in him awoke, eager to meet this woman's desperate need.

His eye travelled slowly round the bare, unfurnished hall. At length it rested on the floor.

Suddenly he started. She saw him hesitate. Then his face grew firm and purposeful.

"Give me half a sheet," he said, "and some bandages."

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**He helped her to tear the sheet in two.**

**At sound of the sharp rending, many eyes turned their way.**

**He spread the sheet upon the floor, and held out his hand for the bandages. "Give me some pins," he said, huskily, "plenty of them. Then leave the rest to me. This is my job."**

**All at once she knew what he was going to do ; and she, who had times without number faced unspeakable sights without flinching, turned away while, stooping, he dipped the bandages in the blood which lay in pools upon the floor.**

**When she looked again, he was on his knees, carefully pinning the crimson strips across the white sheet.**

**Her hand flew to her throat, striving to control an irrepressible sob.**

**He had not recognised her, in her**

## In hoc ☩ Vince

nurse's uniform, but at first sight she had known him, and now vividly recalled the scene of their former meeting—a sunny cricket-field in England; he, in spotless flannels, the hero of the hour, winning a match for his school eleven. She had sat beside his mother and watched her pride in the gay, handsome boy. All eyes had been bent upon him, as he hit out straight and true, made the winning stroke, and carried his bat for top score in the match.

And now . . . As he knelt in his stained khaki, dying eyes watched, in the quiet calm of a strange detachment, the making of that Red Cross flag. Wounded men rolled over, raised themselves on their elbows, and smiled in grim approval.

After that one choking sob, she also smiled bravely back at them.

## **3n hoc ✠ Wince**

**Her flag was ready.**

**He rose to his feet. "Now then! Show me the way to the roof, please. No—I can carry it. No need for you to touch it, Sister. This is my show."**

**She stood beside him on the roof.**

**As he drew the cord taut and fastened it, the breeze caught and unfurled the heavy folds of the sheet, and, slowly opening out, the Red Cross flew, clear and unmistakable, in the sunshine.**

**She laid her hand once more upon the khaki sleeve.**

**"God bless you," she said, a tremor of emotion in her quiet voice. "And, when you write home, don't forget to tell your mother of this thing which you have done."**

**Half an hour later, as he marched his men, under cover of a wood, over the crest of the hill, the young officer**

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stepped out for a moment into a clearing and looked back upon the little town.

German shells were falling, to right and left ; but above the hospital flew the Red Cross flag, brave in the breeze, bright in the gold of the sunset ; and the wounded lay beneath, sheltered by the crimson of their own life-blood.

*SIRE, we see in this an emblem of that which you, your noble Consort, your brave Army, and your devoted people have done for Europe ; and also, we trust and believe, a symbol of the ultimate result of that stupendous sacrifice.*

*You did not shrink from the cross, though it meant, alas ! the very heart's blood of your beautiful kingdom ; and, thanks to that*

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*blood-stained banner, so heroically unfurled, Belgium and her Allies shall pass, at last, into the safety and shelter of an abiding peace.*

*The Calvary of self-sacrifice must ever mean a blood-stained cross. But Calvary leads to the triumph of Resurrection, to the glory of Ascension. Surely, from the Calvary of her suffering, Belgium shall rise again to a new and fuller life, and shall ascend to heights she has not reached before.*

*Florence L. Barclay*

**J. D. H.**  
**KILLED IN ACTION**  
**OCTOBER 21ST**  
**1914**

*(A few weeks after the making  
of the Red Cross Flag.)*



**By FLORENCE L. BARCLAY**

**THE WHEELS OF TIME**

**THE ROSARY**

**THE MISTRESS OF SHENSTONE**

**THE FOLLOWING OF THE STAR**

**THROUGH THE POSTERN GATE**

**THE UPAS TREE**

**THE BROKEN HALO**

**THE WALL OF PARTITION**

**MY HEART'S RIGHT THERE**

**IN HOC VINCE**

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